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# Drama and Theatre in Early Modern Europe

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VOLUME 1

# Joost van den Vondel (1587–1679)

Dutch Playwright in the Golden Age

*Edited by*

Jan Bloemendal  
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Michiel van Musscher (1645–1705), Portrait of Joost van den Vondel (1671)  
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## CHAPTER EIGHT

### VONDEL'S THEATRE AND MUSIC

Louis Peter Grijp and Jan Bloemendal

#### *Golden Age Theatre and Music*

Recent decades have seen a growing awareness of the use of music in seventeenth-century theatre, in the Netherlands too.<sup>1</sup> In 2004 Natascha Veldhorst defended her thesis on 'Musical Scenes on the Amsterdam Stage in the Seventeenth Century', in which she discussed the function of music on stage.<sup>2</sup> To this end she was able to make use of the results of a number of smaller studies concerning Dutch theatre and music.<sup>3</sup> A method for recognising songs in theatre texts ('strophic heuristics') had been developed in a study that had been published in 1991: Louis Grijp's doctoral thesis on the '*contrafactum*' system.<sup>4</sup> After having compiled a database of song stanzas (the 'voetenbank', later called 'liederenbank'), he was able to reconstruct melodies of choral odes and other songs in plays by P.C. Hooft (1581–1647) and elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> However, this awareness of music as an essential part of early modern theatre was not registered by every scholar: prior to this – and even thereafter – modern scholars made editions of sixteenth and seventeenth-century dramas without any reference to theatre music.

In the Dutch Republic, and especially in Amsterdam, the Golden Age was also the golden age of Dutch theatre. In the Amsterdam

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<sup>1</sup> Particularly in the Anglo-Saxon world, more attention has been paid to theatre music at an earlier stage; see, for example, Sternfeld, *Music in Shakespearean Tragedy* (1963). However, it must be said that, to his credit, Worp, *Geschiedenis van het drama en van het tooneel*, 2, pp. 74–76, already devoted an important section to music; Van Gemert, *Tussen de bedrijven door?*, Appendix 2 'Overzicht van melodieën', adopted a list of choral odes that she thought had a musical component.

<sup>2</sup> Veldhorst, *De perfecte verleiding*.

<sup>3</sup> For example: Rasch, 'De muziek in de Amsterdamse Schouwburg'; Grijp and Meeus, 'Muziek op het toneel van de Gouden Eeuw'.

<sup>4</sup> Grijp, *Het Nederlandse lied in de Gouden Eeuw*. A *contrafactum* or counterfact is a song text made to the tune of an existing melody.

<sup>5</sup> Grijp, 'Op zoek naar de melodieën van Geraerd van Velsen'; Hooft, *Granida*, ed. Van Gemert and Grijp.

Schouwburg (Amsterdam's municipal theatre), which opened its gates in 1638, a semi-professional troupe performed several times each week. They staged foreign plays, original tragedies, farces and ballets. Plays by Pieter Cornelisz. Hooft, Gerbrand Adriaensz. Bredero (1585–1618), Theodore Rodenburg (1578–1644) and Samuel Coster (1579–1668) saw reprises, while each year new plays were staged, written by Jan Harmensz. Krul (1601/2–1644), Jan Vos (c. 1610–1667) and Vondel, to name but a few.<sup>6</sup>

In these performances, music played an important role.<sup>7</sup> The playwrights wrote poems that were sung, such as songs for a solo voice and choral songs ('reien'). These musical choruses were sung by anonymous characters, such as a group of citizens, soldiers, maidens or shepherds, or even by an unspecified 'chorus'.<sup>8</sup> The choral songs could have several functions, such as to inform the audience about the events that had taken place, to moralise about the plot, to contemplate aspects of the play, and bridge a temporal gap.<sup>9</sup> Usually such a chorus consisted of just two actors. If the chorus was sung, this may have been done in two voices. But there were also choruses which were recited, probably by only one of the two. The solo songs were part of the action and sung by the actors themselves. In this respect, it has to be borne in mind that all parts were played by men, even the female ones. Until 1655 women were forbidden to act on stage.<sup>10</sup>

Besides vocal music, instrumental music also accompanied the action. We know this from the accounts from the Amsterdam Schouwburg that have been rather well preserved. In each performance at least three musicians participated playing the flute, the violin and the bass. We even know their names: in the first years of the Schouwburg, Arent Arentsz. Koer 'the Flautist' ('de Fluyter') played the flute, Thomas

<sup>6</sup> Veldhorst, *De perfecte verleiding*, pp. 62 and 180.

<sup>7</sup> Even though, under the influence of Seneca's dramas, music, or the singing of choral odes became less important elements in tragedy as compared to other theatrical events, see Veldhorst, *De perfecte verleiding*, p. 205, n. 48.

<sup>8</sup> Choruses for female and 'neutral' groups were often sung by boys; see Grijp, 'Boys and Female Impersonators', p. 153.

<sup>9</sup> Van Gemert, *Tussen de bedrijven door?*, pp. 65–94.

<sup>10</sup> See Albach, '30 Juni 1655'. The problem of female impersonation before 1655 is discussed by Grijp, 'Boys and Female Impersonators'. The Schouwburg accounts also show that in the years between 1648 and 1651 two female singers appeared in Vondel's *Gysbreght* to sing the famous Chorus of Clares; see Grijp, 'Boys and Female Impersonators', p. 133.

Fransz. the violin and Jan Pietersz. the bass.<sup>11</sup> From 1640 to 1644 and from 1647 to 1649 a fourth musician came on the scene. Robert Tyndal played the cornetto (called 'cornet' in the accounts). Besides these musicians a drummer and one or more trumpeters were paid.

It is not known what these instrumentalists played exactly, but they will have accompanied the songs and probably there were entr'actes. Trumpets and drums may have been used to attract the audience's attention, and to accompany royal entrances within the plays. Another possible scene is the watchman playing a trumpet ('the trumpeter at dawn'). But there are more musical 'set scenes' on stage: a lament behind bars (prison scenes), the lover singing beneath the window (aubades and serenades), the polyphonic tribute to the gods (sacrifices) and sleep scenes ('gently murmuring, insight descended').<sup>12</sup>

In most cases, the melodies are no longer known. Sometimes they were indicated in the printed text (in the form of 'to the tune of'), but even these were often lacking. Hooft, for instance, left out all musical indications, to render his plays more similar to the plays by his exemplary dramatist, the Roman philosopher Seneca. But the same Hooft evidently had music in mind when he wrote his choruses. This can be concluded from the stanza form of his choral odes, which reveals that he wrote them to popular melodies from his age, such as English and old Dutch tunes, French 'airs de cour' and madrigals.<sup>13</sup> There is an interesting remark in a manuscript preface to Hooft's *Granida*: 'The songs included in this play can be sung to their melodies or have such a metre that melodies can easily be made for them.'<sup>14</sup> According to Hooft choruses and other songs in theatre could be written not only to existing tunes ('*contrafacta*'), but also as texts for new compositions.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Grijp, *Theatermuziek uit de Gouden Eeuw* and Veldhorst, *De perfecte verleiding*, p. 26 and p. 205, n. 47.

<sup>12</sup> Veldhorst, *De perfecte verleiding*, chapters 3–7.

<sup>13</sup> Grijp, *Theatermuziek uit de Gouden Eeuw*; Hooft, *Granida*, ed. Van Gemert and Grijp, esp. pp. 19–22. Two of Hooft's pieces saw modern performances with the original melodies: *Geeraerdt van Velsen* in 1994, produced by Camerata Trajectina in the Muiderslot, and *Granida* in 2009 as a kind of opera, directed by Wim Trompert.

<sup>14</sup> 'De gesangen hier in gebracht gaen op haer wijsen oft sulcken maet datmen'er lichtlijck wijsen op stellen kan'; quoted from Hooft, *Granida*, ed. Van Gemert, p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> As a matter of fact, at least one of the eleven choruses and songs from *Granida* does not seem to have been written to an existing tune, so we assume that someone has composed new music for it.

*Contexts of Theatre and Music*

The use of music in drama did not start in the seventeenth century. On the contrary, it was as old as Western theatre itself. Already in ancient Greek drama choral odes were sung, or characters sang a tune, accompanied by flutes, cithers or other instruments. Music also accompanied medieval liturgical drama and medieval Dutch plays.<sup>16</sup> It was considered an important means of influencing audiences. Early modern literary critics were aware of this. Vossius, who in his *Poeticae institutiones* compiles almost everything that was known on poetics, also writes about music and drama.<sup>17</sup> He mentions the fact that Aristotle had made music one of the accessory parts of poetics and that it remained to be characterized as non-essential.<sup>18</sup>

In the Low Countries of the sixteenth century, both rhetoricians' drama in Dutch and Latin drama made use of music. The rhetoricians organised themselves into local chambers (resembling guilds) that gathered once a week. There they recited refrains and other poetry and sang songs. Occasionally they held regional contests between chambers at which they staged plays or recited poems. Such contests were accompanied by much ceremony – and music. In some instances the plays and the competition songs were compiled and beautifully printed. Only rarely did those printed texts contain musical notation. However, there are often other indications for music, ranging from indications of tunes to musical stage directions and divergent stanza forms.<sup>19</sup>

Latin drama also had its music. Roughly two forms occurred: Latin school drama, written by headmasters for their pupils at the Latin schools, and academic drama, written to be performed, recited or read by scholars and students at the universities. The latter form was in keeping with the tragedies produced by Seneca, while the former was in keeping with the comedies by the Roman poets Plautus and Terence.

<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, Ramakers and Van Dijk, 'Inleiding' in Van Dijk and Ramakers, *Spel en Spektakel*, pp. 9–34, esp. p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Vossius, *Poeticae institutiones* II, 9 ('De melodia', on music in drama in general); II, 16 ('De choro tragico, item de melodia ...', on music in tragedy); II, 28 ('De ... modulatione comica', on music in comedy).

<sup>18</sup> Vossius, *Poeticae institutiones* II, 1, 8, p. 332; Aristotle, *Poetica* 1447a14–16.

<sup>19</sup> See Veldhorst, 'De gedrukte tekst komt tot leven', on the printed plays of the Vlaardingen contest of 1616.

Their comedies, however, did not contain choral songs (although they exhibited other musical forms). Early modern humanists reintroduced the chorus in their school plays, probably under the influence of classical Greek drama, Senecan tragedy, or popular songs. Moreover, the use of choruses could give more pupils the opportunity to act in such a play. Not all plays contained choral songs, but other ones, especially those by Georgius Macropedius (1487–1558), abounded with such (strophic) odes. This rector of the Latin schools of Liège, Den Bosch and Utrecht respectively was inspired by the German humanist playwright Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522).<sup>20</sup> The collection of his plays, *Omnes fabulae* (1552–1553), contains the first examples of printed musical notation in the Low Countries.

Ballet was another theatrical form that contained music – and was even based on it. Ballet was first recorded at the Amsterdam Schouwburg in 1642. Thereafter it remains on stage, either as an independent/separate artistic form, or as a part of a theatre play. Opera did not come to the Amsterdam stage until 1677, initially imported from France and Italy.<sup>21</sup>

The combination of music and theatre was a European phenomenon. All over Europe – in England, France, Germany, Italy and Spain – plays were accompanied by music.<sup>22</sup> In Germany the 'Singspiel' was a national variant of the opera. Other theatrical events, such as Royal Entries, Water Ballets and Fireworks, also abounded with music – see, for instance, George Frederick Handel's *Water Music* and *Music for the Royal Fireworks*. Dutch theatre music was to some extent influenced by musical practice from abroad. The instruments used in Dutch theatres, for instance, strongly resemble that of the English consort.<sup>23</sup> Nowadays, it is the subject of analysis by scholars, and performing musicians are also engaged in rediscovering, reviving and reinventing theatre music.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> On Macropedius see Grijp, 'Macropedius and Music'. Macropedius is atypical, because he probably composed the tunes for the choral songs himself.

<sup>21</sup> Rasch, 'Amsterdam, 25 november 1677'.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Stein, *Songs of Mortals*, on theatre and music in Spain; Powell, *Music and Theatre in France 1600–1680* and Louvat-Molozay, *Théâtre et musique*. See also Veldhorst, *De perfecte verleiding*, pp. 14–17.

<sup>23</sup> See Rasch, 'De muziek in de Amsterdamse Schouwburg', p. 186.

<sup>24</sup> So, for instance, The Musicians of Swanne Alley, and their CD *In the Streets and Theatres of London: Elizabethan Ballads and Theatre Music* (released by Veritas x2). Also Camerata Trajectina, *Theatermuziek uit de Gouden Eeuw / Dutch Theatre Music 1600–1650* (released by Globe).

*Vondel and Theatre Music*

Vondel considered sung choral odes as important means to move the audience; at least this is what he tells us in the preface to his *Jeptha* (1659):

But just as the Greeks cannot be denied the honour of the illustrious invention of drama, which gradually reached its zenith, so too the performance of a sacred tragedy written in the same vein requires a variety of fitting characters, scenery and the singing of the music of choruses, directed by a great musician like Orlando [di Lasso], so that during the performance the audience may hear a heavenly harmony of sacred sounds that attains to all aspects of divine choral art in its perfection in such a way that it entrances souls, as though charming them from the body, and completely delights them with a foretaste of angelic bliss.<sup>25</sup>

To what extent do we see Vondel's enthusiasm for theatre music embodied in his own work? It is not easy to recognise musical passages in his plays, as Vondel rarely indicated the tunes in the usual manner. We could pay attention to strophic passages and look in the Database of Dutch songs of the Meertens Institute if such stanza forms correspond with those of melodies that were popular in those days (strophic heuristics).<sup>26</sup> Another way of recognising them is by looking for verses from plays by Vondel that are used as tune indications in later songbooks. A famous example is the well-known chorus song of Nuns from *Gysbreght van Aemstel* (1637), 'O kersnacht schooner dan de dagen' ('Christmas night, supernally bright').<sup>27</sup> To this melody hundreds of new songs were written in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Such considerations induced Grijp and Meeus to develop a method of recognising sung passages in theatrical texts, which they demonstrated

<sup>25</sup> Vondel, 'Berecht: Aen de begunstelingen der toneelkunste', to *Jeptha*, WB 8, p 779: 'Maer gelijk den Grieken d'eer van den heerlijcken vont der tooneelspelen, allengs by trappen in top gesteigert, niet kan gelochent worden, zoo vereischt een gewijt treuspel, op hunnen leest geschoeit, tot het uitvoeren, keur van bequame personaedjen, en toestel van tooneel, en maetgezag van reien, geoeffent door eenen grooten Orlando, om onder het speelen d'aenschouwers te laeten hooren eene hemelsche gelijkkluidentheit van heilige galmen, die alle deelen der goddelijcke zangkunste in hunne volkomenheit zodanigh bereickt, datze de zielen buiten zich zelve, als uit den lichame, verruckt, en ten volle met eenen voorsmaek van de gelukzaligheid der engelen vergenoegt.'

<sup>26</sup> See <[www.liederenbank.nl](http://www.liederenbank.nl)>. This database contains the stanza forms of thousands of Dutch songs from the early modern period.

<sup>27</sup> The translations of *Gysbreght* are by Christaan Aercke.

with the example of plays by Samuel Coster.<sup>28</sup> In this chapter we will apply this method to the tragedies of Vondel.

Doing so, the harvest turns out to be scant, more scant than one would anticipate. Only ten of the thirty-two plays we searched, including Vondel's translations of Greek plays, have text parts with recognisable melodies, so *contrafacta*. Two other plays contain passages that are *possibly contrafacta*. The richest plays with regard to music are the famous *Gysbreght van Aemstel* and, more surprisingly, *Jeptha* (1659). In these tragedies all choruses seem to have been sung or, in the case of *Jeptha*, intended to be sung.

The opening line of the Chorus of Amsterdam Virgins ('Rey van Amsterdamsche maeghden') at the end of the first act of *Gysbreght* recurs as a tune indication in some songbooks printed in Amsterdam around 1650.<sup>29</sup> This song has the same stanza form as the aforementioned Chorus of Clarissen, sung at the end of the third act. However, it is not clear whether it was sung to the same melody. According to the form, the Chorus of Denizens ('Rey van Burghzaten') with the famous opening lines: 'Was ever faith more sincere / Between wife and husband clear' ('Waer werd oprechter trouw / Dan Tusschen man en vrouw'), is sung to a melody of the French court composer Antoine de Boësset ('N'espérez plus mes yeux'). The Hymn of Simeon, sung by the Chorus of Nuns in the third act, will have been sung to the popular tune 'Bedruckte herteken' ('Saddened little heart').<sup>30</sup> Finally, the Chorus of Noblemen ('Rey van Edelingen') from the second act has a very simple stanza form that looks ready to be sung, but in fact only resembles Psalm 13 of the Reformed tradition, which is a disagreeable melody in such a Catholic play.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Grijp and Meeus, 'Muziek op het toneel in de Gouden Eeuw', p. 122.

<sup>29</sup> 'Nu stelt het puick van zoete keelen', quoted in *Amstedamse Vrolijkheit* (1647), J.J. Steendam's *Den Distelvink. Darde Deel* (1650), *Vermeerderde Amsterdamsche VREUGHDE-STROOM* [...] 2e deel (1654) and by Vondel himself for his version of Psalm CXXXV.

<sup>30</sup> Van Duyse, *Het oude Nederlandsche lied*, vol. 2, p. 1601.

<sup>31</sup> Later on, Vondel's choruses from *Gysbrecht* were set to new music, for instance by Alphons Diepenbrock (1892/95) and Bernard Zweers (1892). The Catholic brothers Alberdingk Thijm included several *Gysbrecht* choruses in their *Oude en Nieuwere Kerst-Liederen* (*Old and Newer Christmas Songs*), published with piano or organ accompaniment 'for choirs and catholic families' (Amsterdam 1852): 'O Kersnacht! schooner dan de dagen' (no. 69) and 'Wij, Nederlanders, blij van geest' (no. 82), an adaptation of Vondel's chorus 'Wy edelingen, bly van geest'. In spite of the Catholic connotation these choruses were also included in the *Liedboek van de kerken* (*Hymnal of the Churches*, 1973) of the Dutch Protestant church: 'Wij edelingen blij van geest' (set to music by

In *Jeptha of Offerbelofte* (*Jephta or the Sacrificial Vow*, 1659) it is the Chorus of Virgins that concludes the acts with texts that, in view of the stanza forms, could be sung to popular melodies: 'O Schepper fier' ('O proud Creator', first act), 'Questa dolce sirena' ('That sweet siren', second act), 'Objet dont les charmes si doux' ('Object of which the charms so sweet', third act), and 'Blijdschap van mij vliet' ('Joy flee from me', fourth act). This extraordinary richness of *contrafacta* – at least for Vondel – explains the aforementioned emphasis on music in the preface.

In the other plays, too, choral passages occur at the end of the acts. However, Vondel often gave them long, artfully construed stanza forms that are not to be found in the repertoire of popular songs of his age. Often Vondel expands such a 'Strophe' ('Zang') with an 'Antistrophe' ('Tegenzang') and an 'Epode' or 'Closing hymn' ('Toezang'), comparable to the strophe, antistrophe and epode of classical Greek tragedy. In some instances, a passage in a characteristic stanza form occurs alongside these typically Vondelian forms. This is the case in the 'Gesang van d'Egyptische Goden APIS en ISIS' ('Song of the Egyptian deities Apis and Isis') from *Joseph in Egypten* (*Joseph in Egypt*, 1640). This song even has a tune indication: 'Object dont les charmes si doux', the same melody Vondel would use in *Jeptha* two decades later. In the second act of *Salomon* (1648) the Ladies-in-waiting ('hofjuffers') sing a song in a characteristic strophe, belonging to the popular song 'Ach ongelukkige dag' ('Oh ill-fated day'). There are other plays in which one outspoken song passage occurs alongside choruses with more neutral forms: *Palamedes* (1625), *Lucifer* (1654), *Faëton* (1663) and *Noah* (1667).<sup>32</sup> *Leeuwendalers* (1647), and the translation of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*

Adriaan C. Schuurman, 1904–1998) and 'O kerstnacht, schoner dan de dagen', nos. 153 and 154 respectively. Johannes Verhulst (1816–1891) wrote an 'Ouvverture Gijsbreght van Aemstel' (1839). A century later, in 1937, Henk Badings (1907–1987) wrote a 'Heroïsche Ouvverture' to Vondel's "Gijsbreght van Aemstel".

<sup>32</sup> In *Palamedes*, ll. 167–286, the song 'We, soldiers, in our turn do heed' ('Wij Krijslieën passen op ons' beurt') of the combined choruses of Euboeans and Ithacians, has a rather characteristic strophe which in the songbooks often has the indication 'Coridon en Sylvia'; the stanza form of the Chorus of Angels (Rey van Engelen) in *Lucifer*, ll. 1982–2001, betrays the tune 'Questa dolce sirena'; the Chorus of Hours (Rey van Uuren) in *Faëton*, ll. 157–222, can be sung to 'Den lustelijken mei'; the song of the Ladies-in-waiting (Joffers), 'Zou het al zinken en vergaen, / Waer bleef de zwaen?' has exactly the same form as a tune with an unidentified tune indication 'Crakougie', to be found in P. Elzevier, *Den Lacchenden Apoll* (Amsterdam, 1667), printed in the same year as Vondel's play. Possibly this tune corresponds with the popular tune 'Quand la bergère'.

(*Koning Edipus*, 1660) also contain passages that may be based on existing melodies.<sup>33</sup>

Apart from these extremes in which all choral songs are sung or only one single passage, there are also plays in which several musical parts are sided by more neutral choruses, viz. *Het Pascha* (*Passover*, 1612) and *Hippolytus* (1628). In Vondel's first play *Het Pascha*, two or three sung choruses occur: (1) the 'hymn or song of praise' ('hymne of lofzang') of the chorus of Israelites ('Israelitische Rei': 'Nu zinght, nu speelt, nu reyt en danst'; 'Now sing and dance in chorus') in which one may easily recognise the popular melody 'De lustelijke mei is nu in de tijd' ('The pleasant May is now'), (2) the song 'Hebreen speelt s'Hemels lof' ('Hebrews play the praise of Heaven') from the fourth act, which is quoted by Abraham de Koning as a tune indication in *Achabs treurspel* (*Tragedy of Achab*, 1610),<sup>34</sup> and (3) the chorus ode 'Steenen Farao wilt swichten' ('Stone Pharaoh do yield') which is in keeping with the reformed Psalm 38 that, during his Anabaptist period, Vondel may have deemed suitable for a play.<sup>35</sup> In the second act of *Hippolytus* (1628) a Chorus starts to sing in the stanza form of 'Phoebus is lang over zee' and then turns to that of 'Sei tanto gratioso'.<sup>36</sup> The chorus at the end of the fourth act, 'Hoe draeyt Fortuyn het al', is also written in a song-like strophe. The melody is mentioned in the margin: 'Het was een jonger held' ('It was a young hero').<sup>37</sup>

Let us recount what we have found so far. There are ten (or maybe a few more) plays in which music occurs. In two of them all choruses seem to be sung on existing melodies and in most other plays only one or some passages. This is a relatively small number compared to the

<sup>33</sup> *Leeuwendalers*, ll. 1997–2021, 'It is a wedding in the meadow' ('t Is bruiloft in de weide'), is written in an unidentified, song-like stanza form; *Koning Edipus*, ll. 1301–10, Edipus' 'Turn' ('Keer') 'Citheron, spel ick met mijn' mont' has a stanza form that, coincidentally or otherwise, fits the popular songs 'Wanneer de zon met morgenrood' and 'Aan watervlieten Babylons'.

<sup>34</sup> As can be concluded from the dates (*Achab* 1610, *Het Pascha* 1612) De Koning did not use the printed version for his *contrafactum*, but a manuscript. *Het Pascha* had already been performed in 1610.

<sup>35</sup> Smit, *Van Pascha tot Noah*, 1, p. 52, n. 3, already mentioned the possibility that chorus songs from *Het Pascha* were sung on Psalm melodies.

<sup>36</sup> The songs start at ll. 889 and 931. These melodies were already observed by Bruinsma, 'An introduction to Vondel and music', p. 111.

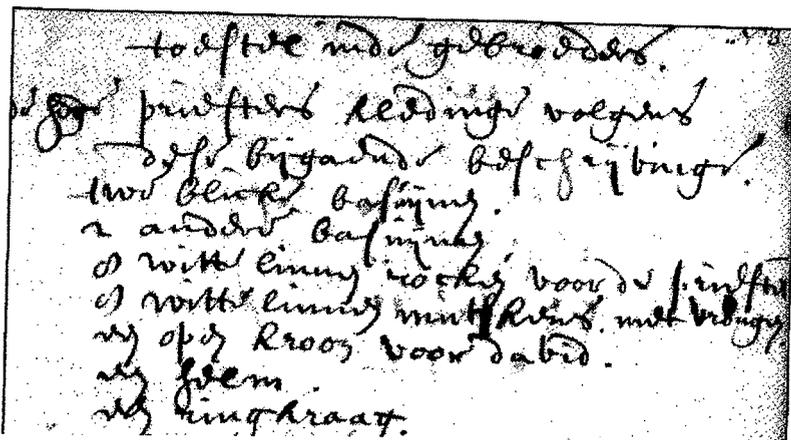
<sup>37</sup> Smit, *Van Pascha tot Noah*, 1, pp. 151–52, is surprised by the exceptional mention the tunes receive and the unconventional form of the chorus after the second act, consisting of three clearly distinct parts. He does not have an explanation for either phenomenon.

over thirty plays by Vondel we examined. The method may be one of the reasons for this scant crop: we limited ourselves to identifying passages with formal characteristics of strophic songs. It is possible that melodies are hidden behind the uncharacteristic songs, i.e. melodies that belong to songs with less characteristic stanza forms. They do exist. Moreover, we have to consider the possibility that Vondel had other resources for music than making *contrafacta* on popular melodies. His chorus songs could have been set to music by composers.

Let us take Vondel's *Gebroeders* (*Brothers*, 1640). The structure of the songs in itself does not induce us to think of a musical performance. There is, however, an (oft-cited) manuscript direction to this play indicating that the priests' ode was sung and that instruments were played (at least during the first performances):

The musicians play on their wind instruments this appended composition, which was sung by priests on stage, in four parts.<sup>38</sup>

The singers were males. We know that from Vondel's own handwritten casting, mentioning the four singers of the choruses: Barend van Hoorn, Jacob Willems, Jan Nooseman and Jelis Nooseman. Jelis was



Joost van den Vondel, *Gebroeders*, t'Amsterdam, by Dominicus vander Stichel, for Abraham de Wees, 1640. 4°. KB 392 H 28.

<sup>38</sup> 'De speeluiden speelen op haar blaas Instrumenten dit bijgaende musikstuk gespeelt ende van priesteren op het toneel gesongen, met vier partijen'; see Veldhorst, *De perfecte verleiding*, pp. 144–45.

14 years old in 1640, his brother Jan 19, and the others probably in between.<sup>39</sup> Vondel also noted in the list of properties 'two trombones made of sheet metal' ('twe blicke basuijnen') and 'two other trombones' ('2 andere besuijnen') as well as 'trumpeters' ('trompetters'). Obviously, the chorus had to be sung by the four singers, accompanied by four trombones. This must have resulted in a solemn sound, quite different from the usual chant by one or two voices accompanied by flute, violin and bass. Unfortunately the sheet with the music is no longer extant. Possibly the composition applied to the first act, in which the chorus of priests strides into the temple of Gibeah (ll. 153 sqq.). There Vondel wrote:

when entering, the final part of the chorus of the priests will be sung, and played by the musicians<sup>40</sup>

A few verses later is written:

the presentation of the ark of the covenant and the menorah, and the added song are spoken by the priests in this way<sup>41</sup>

Apparently, the choral song of the priests was partly sung and partly spoken, at least if we take Vondel's word 'gesproken' (spoken) literally (which might also be a neutral expression for 'rendered' here).<sup>42</sup> The entire choral song comprises a Chant and an Antichant, both coming to fourteen verses, and an Epode of eight verses. It must have been an impressive moment in the performance. This can also be inferred from its reception. In Jan Zoet's *Thimoklea* (1641) we see the stanza form of the Epode from *Gebroeders* in a song, sung by 'Sacrificial singers' ('Offerzangers') who execute a sacrifice by means of which Alexander the Great hopes to obtain a prophecy of the future.<sup>43</sup> The situation is similar to that in *Gebroeders* when King David visits the temple to ask God's advice. Six years after *Thimoklea* we find in Willem van Heemskerck's *Hebreeusche Heldinne* (*Hebrew Heroine*, 1657) the entire

<sup>39</sup> See Grijp, 'Boys and Female Impersonators', p. 150. For a facsimile of the cast list of *Gebroeders* written by Vondel himself, see Albach, *Langs kermessen en hoven*, p. 48; Erenstein, *Een theatergeschiedenis der Nederlanden*, p. 223.

<sup>40</sup> 'ingaende wort de toesang vande priesteren gesongen en van de speeluiden gespeelt.'

<sup>41</sup> 'de vertooning vande bondkist en kandelaer en de toesang word aldus van de priesters gesproken.'

<sup>42</sup> The remarks quoted do not make clear which parts exactly were sung or spoken. In both remarks only the Epode ('Toezang') is mentioned.

<sup>43</sup> See Cordes, *Jan Zoet, Amsterdammer*, pp. 154–64, without mentioning music.



Our Dutch playwright, and exceptionally talented Poet, Van den Vondel had staged this so poignantly and edifyingly, that my music was inflamed to stage the choral odes and follow his metres and rhymes with strings and voices, and to represent the power of and force of his style naturally and powerfully in such a way that my notes, as they told me, touched on Your Honour's heart and moved it almost to tears, when Your Honour's ears heard the bitter laments of our Simon Peter and his companion Paul.<sup>48</sup>

Obviously Vondel had been moved almost to tears when he heard his verses set to music by Padbrué. It is impossible that this happened at a regular performance in the Amsterdam municipal theatre. There Vondel's play has never been staged, due to its Catholic character. Perhaps Padbrué initially composed the choruses, as in *Gebroeders*, and then went on to set other verses to music when it became clear that the play would not be staged. Thus it was possible to attain at least a musical performance, though in a condensed form.

In sum, in Vondel there are several types of musical passages: *contrafacta* on existing melodies and music composed especially for the situation, such as in *Gebroeders* and *Peter en Pauwels*. We do not know whether music was composed for Vondel's songs in drama prior to *Gebroeders*. One possibility is the Chorus of Nuns from *Gysbreght van Aemstel*, the melody of which has sometimes been ascribed to Padbrué. The main argument for this is in fact merely that there are no musical sources or mention of that melody before 1638, when *Gysbreght* debuted.

There is yet another way of recognising musical passages in theatre pieces that has not been mentioned so far: so-called 'cantat-formulas'. For instance, in *Adam in ballingschap* (*Adam Exiled*, 1664) Adam introduces the Chorus of Guardian Angels (Rey van Wachtengelen) as follows:

Guardian angels, follow our track. Break into a merry song. Tell us  
By turns about the origin of all things.

one of Padbrué's choruses from *De Tranen* has been recorded, reconstructed by Louis Grijp.

<sup>48</sup> Padbrué, 'Dedication to Symon Felt' in Padbrué, *De Tranen Petri ende Pauli*: 'Onze Neerlantsche Dichter, en zonderlingh begaefde Poët, van de Vondel had dit zoo beweetchlyck en stightelyck op het tooneel gebrocht, dat myn Zang-kunst ontvonckt wert, om de reyen op het tooneel aen te voeren, zyn maet en rymen met snaeren en stemmen te volgen, en de kracht en het pit van dien styl naer myn vermogen wat nuerlyck en krachtigh uyt te beelden, zulcks dat myn Nooten, zo my gezeyt wiert, uw E. Hart raecten, en bykans tot traenen beweeghde, als uwe E. Lief-hebbende ooren het bitt're traen geluit van onsen Symon Petrus en zyn mee-gezel Paulus omvingen', cited from Veldhorst, *De perfecte verleiding*, p. 214, n. 142.

The resonance of Paradise inspires desire to sing along with you  
How this universe was made so gloriously out of nothing.<sup>49</sup>

This appeal is followed by a threefold Strophe and Antistrophe (Zang and Tegenzang) by the guardian angels, written in six typically long Vondel stanzas of fourteen verses each, which in no way suggest a *contrafactum* of a popular song. We may speculate that Vondel nevertheless intended this chorus to be sung, hoping for a composer to set it to music. On the other hand, he must have realised that a stage performance was most unlikely at that time, because after *Gebroeders* the plays that Vondel (who converted to Catholicism) wrote were no longer staged as regularly, and after Padbrué's setting of *Peter en Pauwels*, no music was composed for any of his theatrical texts.

One may wonder whether the composed polyphonic music in *Gebroeders* (1640) marked a turn in Vondel's relation to theatre music from the *contrafactum* system to composed music,<sup>50</sup> for which Padbrué's setting of *Peter en Pauwels* was a logical consequence. This does not seem to be the case. On the contrary, we have observed above that even in his later tragedies, which had become closet dramas, Vondel occasionally adopted a chorus that could be sung to a popular tune.

Six years after Vondel's death one of his late pieces was performed after all. In 1685 Govert Bidloo staged Vondel's *Faëton*, *Oft reuckelose stoutheid* (*Phaeton, or Reckless Valour*, 1663) in his own adaptation.<sup>51</sup> This play on the overambitious son of the Sun god who wished to drive his father's chariot but failed, had never been performed during Vondel's life. It took a daring defender of Vondel's plays to get it staged. In Bidloo's interpretation, *Faëton* became a musical-dramatic show with music and dance, as well as pomp and circumstance and theatrical machines. Bidloo even added musical choruses. We might say that justice was done to Vondel after all, but there were also critics complaining that Bidloo had violated Vondel's piece.

What about the set music scenes that Veldhorst discerned in the plays of Jan Harmensz. Krul (1601–1646) and that she extended to seventeenth-century drama in general – guardian and prison scenes,

<sup>49</sup> Vondel, *Adam in ballingschap*, ll. 211–214: 'Wachtenglen, volght ons spoor. heft vrolijk aen: ontvout, / By beurte op eene ry, den oirsprong aller dingen. / De galm van 't paradijs scheidt lust u na te zingen / Hoe dit heelal uit niet zoo heerlijk wiert gebout.'

<sup>50</sup> This was suggested in Grijp, 'Muziek en literatuur', p. 252.

<sup>51</sup> See on this Rasch, '19 februari 1685'; Veldhorst, *De perfecte verleiding*, n. 147, gives an interesting addition about the melodies involved.

serenade, sacrifice and sleeping scene? The only one of these scenes to which Vondel seems to have felt attracted is the sacrifice. In *Het Pascha* the Chorus of Israelites is singing during Moses's offering. But at this time the musical sacrifice was not yet a set scene; in fact, it was the first musical sacrificial scene on the Dutch stage.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, the famous four-part Chorus of Priests in *Gebroeders*, sung when King David enters the temple, recalls the atmosphere of a sacrifice. In *Jeptha* the Chorus of Virgins sings when Jephthah's daughter has prepared herself for sacrifice – although the sacrifice itself is not shown onstage. Finally there may have been musical elements in the Mass scene in *Gysbreght van Aemstel* (1637) that could also be regarded as a kind of sacrifice. But we do not know this for sure; the burgomasters protested against the 'display of forms of papistic superstition such as Masses and other ceremonies' and the play was not allowed to be performed until the Mass scene had been removed.<sup>53</sup>

### Conclusion

Applying methods such as strophic heuristics to Vondel's drama texts, we have found that some of his plays contain *contrafacta*, i.e. texts meant to be sung to popular tunes, just as other Golden Age authors did for their theatre plays. Unlike them, Vondel wanted only choruses to be sung and did not write solo songs. Vondel's production of theatre *contrafacta* is not very high: we have found them in at most a dozen out of the more than thirty plays we investigated. But it is possible that Vondel expected his choral texts to be set to music by composers such as his friend Cornelis Thymansz. Padbrué, especially his extensive choruses composed of Strophes, Antistrophes and Epodes, written in long ingenious stanzas. Our most striking observation is that after Vondel's plays were not performed on stage anymore, he did not change his musical policy when writing new plays: he continued to include *contrafacta* in some of his dramas and sometimes suggested that his choruses should be sung. Although he must have realised that his plays would serve as closet dramas, Vondel obviously continued to conceive of them as being accompanied by a performance, including singing and music.

<sup>52</sup> Veldhorst *De perfecte verleiding*, p. 137.

<sup>53</sup> '[...] verthooninghe van de superstition van de paperije als misse en andere ceremonien'. See Sterck in WB, 3, p. 514; unsurprisingly, the ministers of the Reformed church disapproved of theatre in general, see, for instance, Duits, '11 november 1621'.

### APPENDIX. *Contrafacta* in plays by Vondel

The numbers of volumes and pages refer to the WB-edition.

#### *Het Pascha ofte De verlossinge Israels wt Egijpten* (1612)

- Act 2 (1, p. 219) Choor 'Steenen Pharao wilt swichten': stanza of Psalm 38
- Act 4 (1, p. 242) Den reye der Israeliten zinghen 'Hebreen speelt s'Hemels lof': quoted as a tune indication in *Achabs Treur-spel* (1618) by Abraham de Koning
- Act 5 (1, p. 252) Hymne ofte lof-zangh vanden Israelijtschen reye 'Nu zinght, nu speelt, nu rey en danst': stanza of 'De lustelijke mei'

#### *Palamedes oft Vermoorde onnoselheyd* (1625)

- Act 1 (2, p. 644) Rey van Eubeërs [and] Rey van Ithakoisen 'Wy Krijslie passen op ons' beurt': stanza of 'Coridon en Sylvia'

#### *Hippolytus of Rampsalige kuyscheyd* (1628)

- Act 2 (3, p. 230) Rey 'Sneller vlied hy met sijn' voet': stanzas of 'Phoebus is lang over de zee' and 'Sei tanto gratioso'
- Act 4 (3, p. 248) Rey 'Hoe draeyt Fortuyn het al': tune indication in the margin 'Het was een jonger held'

#### *Gysbreght van Aemstel* (1637)

- Act 1 (3, p. 547) Rey van Amsterdamsche maeghden 'Nu stelt het puick van zoete keelen', quoted as tune indication by Vondel himself and others
- Act 2 (3, p. 557) Rey van edelingen 'Wy edelingen, bly van geest': stanza of Psalm 13
- Act 3 (3, p. 565) Rey van Klaerissen 'O Kersnacht, schooner dan de daegen': quoted as tune indication for dozens of song texts
- Act 4 (3, p. 570) Rey [van Klaerissen] 'Vergun, o God, op zijne bede' (Hymn of Simeon): tune indication 'Bedruckte harteke' (in Vondel's *Poëzy* (1650), p. 574)
- Act 4 (3, p. 577) Rey van Burghzaten 'Waer werd oprechter trouw': stanza of 'N'espérez plus mes yeux' (A. de Boësset)

#### *Joseph in Egypten* (1640)

- Appendix to the play (4, p. 247) Gesang van d'Egyptische Goden APIS en ISIS 'Och Apis Apis och wat haet': tune indication 'Object dont les charmes si doux'

#### *Leeuwendalers* (1647)

- Act 5 (5, p. 353) Rey van Leeuwendalers 'tIs bruiloft in de weide': unidentified lyrical stanza, possibly of 'Hoe zalig zijn de landen'

#### *Salomon* (1648)

- Act 2 (5, p. 390) Hofjoffers 'Nu zingt Astarte lof': stanza of 'Ach ongelukkige dag'

*Lucifer* (1654)

- Act 5 (5, p. 689) Rey van Engelen 'Gezegt zy de Helt': stanza of 'Questa dolce sirena'

*Jeptha of Offerbelofte* (1659)

- Act 1 (8, p. 792) Rey van Maeghden 'O Galaäd': stanza of 'O Schepper fier'
- Act 2 (8, p. 806) Rey van Maeghden 'Aertsvader Josef, och': stanza of 'Questa dolce sirena'
- Act 3 (8, p. 828) Rey van Maeghden 'Toen d'oude dwinglant van den Nijl': stanza of 'Objet dont les charmes si doux'
- Act 4 (8, p. 838) Rey van Maeghden 'Laet gehoorzaamheit': stanza of 'Blijdschap van mij vliet'

*Koning Edipus* Uit Sofokles (1660)

- (8, p. 919) Edipus 'Citheron, spel ick met mijn' mont': possibly stanza of 'Wanneer de zon het morgenrood' or 'Aan watervlieten Babylon'

*Faëton of Reuckeloze Stouthheit* (1663)

- Act 1 (6, p. 43) Rey van Uuren 'Verheffen we eenstemmigh met lofgedicht': stanza of 'De lustelijke mei'

*Noah of ondergang der Eerste weerelt* (1667)

- Act 3 (10, p. 436) Joffers 'Zou het al zinken en vergaen': stanza of 'Crakougie' which is possibly 'Quand la bergère'